

Know the Signs of Grooming

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Grooming is a manipulative process that abusers use to build trust and create opportunities to exploit children. It happens incrementally and intentionally. Be alert for the following signs:

- **Flattery and emotional manipulation:** Complimenting the child excessively or making them feel “special” or “important.” Parents are also groomed. Be alert to compliments directed towards you.
- **Physical affection:** A pattern of physical contact (hugs, pats, touching, massages) that feels odd or goes beyond average, non-sexual affection.
- **Excessive attention or gifts:** An adult who singles out your child for special promotion, overt praise, or material gifts (money, food, bags, jewelry, etc.).
- **Secretive behavior:** Encouraging a child to keep secrets or saying things like, “This stays between you and me.”
- **Isolating the child:** Someone creating situations where they are alone with your child, away from other supervising adults or peers.